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The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America

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The Commission on the Church and Social Service

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The Church's Appeal in Behalf of Labor

The Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America has unanimously adopted, among other specific principles for which it asserts the Church must stand,

First: The gradual and reasonable reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practicable point, and that degree of leisure for all which is a condition of the highest human life.

Second: A release from employment one day in seven.

Third: A living wage as a minimum in every industry, and the highest wage that each industry can afford.

The Federal Council's Commission on the Church and Social Service accepts as the basis of its belief and action the entire

program adopted by the Federal Council in its report on the Church and Social Service. For the concentration of attention upon concrete conditions, and because of the present keen interest in the three closely related propositions above set forth, it submits at this time to the Churches the following statement and recommendations, and urges that favorable action be taken upon them by individual churches, synods, assemblies, conferences, conventions, brotherhoods and other representative bodies, in the many communions which compose the Federal Council.

The Pittsburgh Survey revealed to all interested in industrial conditions a state of affairs in many respects surprising. In the steel mills, according to the report, the twelve-hour day prevailed. Twenty per cent. of the employees, or about 14,000 men in Allegheny County, worked twelve hours a day seven days in the week. Full sixty per cent. of all employees were classed as unskilled and were paid at the rate of sixteen and one-half cents an hour. Such employees, therefore, by working twelve hours a day, were enabled to earn one dollar and ninety-eight cents per day, any reduction in time involving a proportionate loss in wages. The high wages paid to a relatively small number of men in positions of responsibility—three or four per cent. getting over five dollars a day—had, heretofore, misled the public as to the general scale of wages in this particular industry. An investigation of the living conditions showed that the wage actually paid to unskilled laborers in the steel mills was not a living wage—that is, not a wage on which

a man with an average family could live respectably, under decent sanitary conditions and with a reasonable degree of comfort. The investigations of the Survey showed, furthermore, that in precisely the regions where these low-paid workmen were housed, the drink evil was at its worst and the general morality at its lowest. Saloons found this the most profitable region financially. While a fair proportion of workmen and their families were found resisting these influences, it was plain that the drink evil and the tendency of the population to immorality were connected with the prevailing industrial and housing conditions. For most men working twelve hours a day, seven days in the week, little is left except lethargy or stimulants. There was little enjoyment of life possible for them except the enjoyment of the senses. What the Survey revealed in Pittsburgh is, we are advised, true to a greater or less extent—often to the same extent—in other industrial centers.

The illustration is taken from one industry and one center. The range of the propositions, however, is far wider. For while it may be proper to omit from consideration the workers engaged in the professions and in agriculture, those should be included who are engaged in domestic and personal service, trade and transportation, and in manufacturing and mechanical pursuits.

Moreover, with the increasing complication of the industrial situation, there has come the necessity of conducting many industries seven days in the week, and as a rule those industries conducted seven days in the week require the service of the in-

dividual employee seven days in the week, and the rate of wages is set not for a six-day, but a seven-day scale.

One Day's Rest in Seven.

The Commission on the Church and Social Service of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America calls the attention of the Churches of Christ everywhere to this condition and the menace involved in it, and urges upon all Christian churches officially, through their pulpits, their brotherhoods, and various other organizations, to emphasize and bring home to their members their Christian obligation in these premises—namely, that it is the right of every man to have one day out of the seven for rest and recreation of body, soul and mind, and that it is the obligation of every Christian employer so to arrange his business that each of the employees may have one day holiday in seven without diminution of wages. The normal holiday is the Christian Sabbath, the Lord's Day, but where the conditions of industry or service require continuance of work seven days and the consequent employment of some part of the employees on the Lord's Day, then those so employed are entitled to receive a holiday on some other day in the week; and, furthermore, that it is the obligation of every Christian employer so to arrange his scale of wages that the living wage of his employees is calculated, not on a seven-day, but on a six-day basis.

A Living Wage.

It is the obligation of every Christian employer, a part of the essential Christian teaching of the brotherhood of man, to pay

every employee a living wage, that is, a wage on which not only the worker but the average family can live under proper sanitary conditions and with reasonable comfort. Normally, the great bulk of the industrial work of our country should be done by the heads of families, and wages should be adjusted not to the cost of living of the unmarried hoarder but to the family life in the home. The living wage differs from time to time and from place to place. The obligation remains unvaried, and no industry can be counted as properly conducted from the standpoint of Christian ethics which is not so conducted that all employees employed therein receive a living wage.

Reasonable Hours of Labor.

It is manifest that that industry which, employing its laborers six days in the week, compels them to work twelve hours out of the twenty-four, does not give to those employees a proper opportunity for sane and healthy living. Family life, intelligent social intercourse with one's fellows, are impossible under such conditions, and the laborer not only is not encouraged to develop upward, but by the conditions of his labor, is held in an inferior and degraded condition, with no chance of development. Such a condition is, we believe, contrary to the dictates of the religion of Christ and a menace to the well-being of the State. It is an obligation resting upon Christian employers so to organize their industry that the employee may have reasonable hours of labor.

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In view of present discussions and in view of the existing diversities of opinion, this Commission is not prepared to state for all industrial conditions what is a reasonable working day. The movement for the standardization of reasonable hours at eight for all industries has not reached such a stage that, in spite of its own opinion that eight hours for labor is reasonable, this Commission is prepared to call upon members of Christian churches to adopt that standard as a part of their Christian obligation, but it is the conviction of this Commission that anything over ten hours in any business or employment is an abuse which should not be tolerated in a Christian community, nor exacted by a Christian employer. This Commission recommends to the official bodies of Christian churches, in order to standardize, as it were, the simplest Christian obligations in the industrial field, to adopt resolutions calling upon employers of labor within those churches to conform, in their industrial operations to these three simple rules:

One day's rest in each seven.

Reasonable hours of labor.

A living wage based on these reasonable hours of labor.

The Commission on the Church and Social Service

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